

UMaine women's hockey sweeps, men's splits in weekend series against New Hampshire

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## Cultural appropriation and costumes

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Sam Tracy (<https://mainecampus.com/author/stracy/>)

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Every year the conversation about politically correct Halloween costumes rears its ugly head, only to die down once the holiday is over. The conversation consists of one side claiming disrespect and insensitivity toward their cultures and identities, and the other side arguing about the limits of political correctness. In recent years, more and more college campuses are taking the subject seriously. So far, the University of Maine has not been one of them.

According to the Bangor Daily News, however, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) has been taking the matter very seriously. UNH's Student Senate called the administration to denounce culturally insensitive costumes and "insensitive acts of racism" that often happen around Halloween. The campus also reported sightings of fliers and posters with sayings such as, "You wear the costume for a night. I wear the stigma for a lifetime."

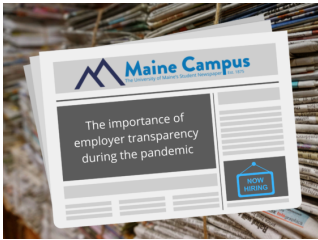
Halloween is riddled with problematic practices. Over the past few decades, even the act of taking candy from your neighbors can be considered dangerous with anxieties over tampered candy. Dressing up, however, was long considered the most harmless thing a person could do for Halloween. You can't hurt anyone unless you accidentally hit them with your fake reaper scythe. The reality of Halloween costumes is becoming ignorance and insensitivity to others.

To claim that a costume is culturally appropriating means someone views your costume as taking from their culture — something that should not be considered a costume to put on and take off the next day. Costumes like Native American chiefs, Dia De Los Muertos themed looks and any type of blackface actively hurt the communities they originally belonged to. These looks are not yours to strap on and commodify once a year. Costumes that imitate real cultural heritage and history should only be worn by the people who share that heritage and history.

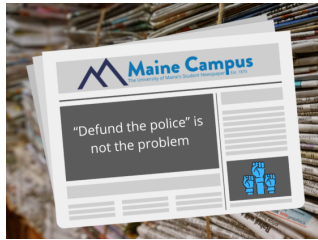
Amid cries of over-politicizing a national holiday, there is truth to the damages done. People of color commonly have to spend the night watching people dressed up as sacred parts of their culture. "On top of centuries of oppression, marginalized groups must now contend with people mocking their identity, right in front of their faces," writes Teen Vogue, which recently published an article on the consequences of cultural appropriation in costumes. Teen Vogue asked six brave people to explain how cultural appropriation makes them feel and how it affects their communities. I encourage you to read and find your empathy.

Beyond the idea of insensitivity and fun, every Halloween people of color have to watch their culture being shed onto the floor and then dumped in the trash and washed down the drain after the appeal of the look is lost. The people left looking on in horror are the same people who cannot wash off their skin and their history. They should not have to. You cannot wear their skin for one night to have fun while communities of color suffer. By wearing costumes that the people around you have repeatedly asked you not to, after they have explained why you shouldn't and how doing so hurts them, you feed into a system that disregards non-white voices and disvalues their opinions. Listen to them, and this Halloween go as a superhero instead.

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